DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 321 046 CE 055 143

AUTHOR Lasam, Gloria Z.
TITLE Philippines: Mobile Tent School for Selected Communities. Literacy Lessons.
INSTITUTION International Bureau of Education, Geneva (Switzerland).
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 17p.; For other "Literacy Lessons" booklets, see CE 055 128-167. Also available in French.
AVAILABLE FROM International Bureau of Education, P.O. Box 199, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.
PUB TYPE Reports - General (140)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Access to Education; Adult Education; Basic Skills; Disadvantaged; Educational History; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Health Education; Illiteracy; Labor Force Development; Literacy; *Literacy Education; Minority Groups; *Mobile Classrooms; National Programs; *Nonformal Education; Nutrition; *Rural Education; Success
IDENTIFIERS International Literacy Year 1990; *Mobile Tent Schools; *Philippines

ABSTRACT

The Philippines received the literacy award from Unesco in the 1986 International Literacy Day competition. The award was for the mobile tent school (MTS), an alternative school that can reach out to the most remote and deprived areas where groups of ethnic minorities exist whose cultures have resisted the lure of civilization. The nongraded MTS for seven tribes implemented the findings of a literacy survey in the Cagayan Valley region. Ninety educators served as field researchers and experimental teachers. A collection of indigenous teaching materials was developed, the training needs of teachers were identified, and policies that conflict with the minority tribes were identified. The researchers' training included measures to ensure their safety, since some tribes had a history of headhunting. The nonformal education program of the MTS provides four categories of essential learning: family and community life, literacy and numeracy, health and nutrition, and livelihood. The mobility of the tent is important, given the fact that the tribes move as they search for food. The success of the MTS depends on the teacher. (CML)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED321046

LITERACY LESSONS

CE 055 143

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY YEAR

Philippines: mobile tent school for selected communities

by Gloria Z. Lasam

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S Adlung

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF EDUCATION

ORIGIN OF THE TENT SCHOOL PROJECT

The Philippines, via its non-formal mobile tent school, received the coveted literacy award from Unesco in connection with the International Literacy Day competition in 1986. Recognized as the first in Asia, the mobile tent school (MTS) highlights the possibility of an alternative schooling that can reach out to the remotest depressed and deprived areas, where groups of ethnic communities exist whose culture and lifestyle have resisted the lure of civilization; whose needs and interests are not necessarily the same as ours; and whose situation emphasizes the inequalities and disparities in the delivery and allocation of resources. In this decade of 'Education for all', the non-formal mobile tent school deserves support and encouragement from government and private agencies, as it introduces a more economical and effective education system to children who are beyond the reach of a structured one. It also stimulates the highly imaginative rural teachers to make things possible within their limited resources and under difficult circumstances.

The non-graded mobile tent school for selected ethnic communities implements the findings of a literacy survey on ethnic communities in the Cagayan Valley region of the Philippines. Through the author, the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS), Region 02, received a research grant in 1985 from the Programme for Decentralized Educational Development (PRODED) for elementary education, a World Bank-funded project which was completed in 1987. Principally, the mobile tent school explores an alternative system of schooling adapted to the culture and lifestyle of the ethnic communities. As a condition to preparing a curriculum for them, an ethnographic profile had to be drawn for each of the seven ethnic tribes

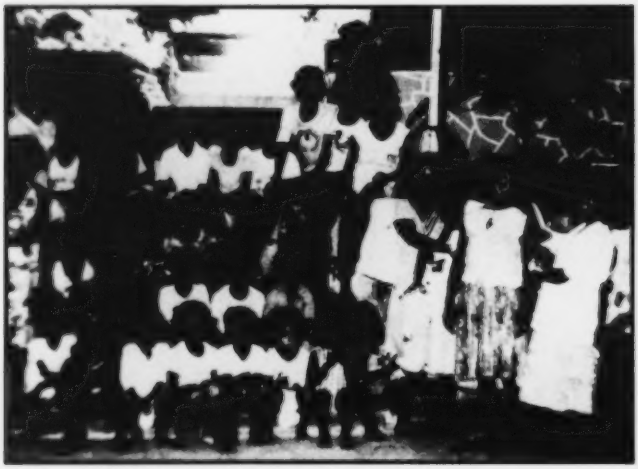
under study. A collection of indigenous teaching materials was also a component of the project. Other studies involved identification of the training needs of teachers in deprived areas and the identification of policies that conflict with the culture of the hilltribes.

The mobile tent school project significantly marks the growing interest and concern of the Philippines government to provide opportunities for the ethnic groups through a schooling system that will raise their consciousness to knowledge, skills and manpower on which they can build a better life, even if they do not receive further formal instruction; to map out for the government the manifestation of poverty and malnutrition, disease, illiteracy and squalor that afflict their marginal groups; and to increase understanding and develop appreciation for these ethnic cultures through their folklore, songs and dances, customs and traditions.

Ninety school people were involved in the mobile tent school as field researchers and experimental teachers, some of whom went to live with the hilltribes in an immersion process. DECS Region 02 collaborated with various government ministries in its bid to mobilize

A typical ethnic village lacking even the most basic amenities.

people and resources in an experiment on agency collaboration and cooperation. These ministries handled the preparation of curriculum materials under the consultancy of the Research Department of the University of the Philippines. The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) offered assistance in translating materials into the dialects of the natives, and in sharing their literacy materials with the research team. The Bureaus of Elementary and Non-Formal Education offered the assistance of their technical staff and facilitated the release of funds. Not to be overlooked was the encouragement from the local government of Cagayan.



A significant event in the long history of the Agtas — their first "graduation ceremony".

On January 19, 1985, and again on April 7, 1986 in a small village of Peñablanca, Cagayan, a group of 'Agtas' belonging to the larger Negrito cultural minority celebrated a significant event in their long history of struggle for existence. They were gathered for their 'graduation ceremony'. The first one was sponsored by the SIL for adult learners and the second, by the Mobile Tent School (MTS) for children age 6 to 12. These events are particularly significant if one realizes that this group, like other ethnic groups in the region, has a history of rejecting schooling.

Fifty-one participants in the SIL Literacy program were enrolled in a functional literacy program; twenty of these graduated as neo-literates and twelve as lay teachers. The other nineteen, who were still in the process of completing their training, were awarded attendance certificates.

Researchers set off on an important mission — their first attempt to penetrate the ethnic communities.

THE TARGET ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

An analysis of educational deprivation requires a thorough knowledge of the targeted minorities. Thus a background study of the target learners had to be made before planning a development program for them. Seven target communities were identified for this project: the *Agta, Ayangan, Bugkalot, Dumagat, Isneg, I'wak and Tinguian.* Six are hilltribes, and one, the Dumagat, is a shoreline tribe.

Phase I of the Project presents an ethnographic profile of the seven ethnic groups. An ethnographic profile in this project is a presentation of the values and various social, economic, political and cultural forces that profoundly affect the learning system of children, including: (1) family and kinship system, (2) life cycle, (3) leadership and authority, (4) value orientation, and (5) food and culture and the realism of supernatural.

Various means of gathering data were employed by the researchers to accurately assess the clientele. They made use of relevant data found in government reports, statistical bulletins and agency development programs. The most successful method was the process called immersion, in which researchers lived with the people for four weeks. Their sojourn in the target area gave them deeper insights into the life of the people, as particular features of their ecology affected their economic endeavors and other patterns of living. Cameras and tape recorders were used to document the activities of the people. In preparation for the immersion process, the researchers underwent a weeklong intensive training in fieldwork which featured lectures, discussions, practice and preparation of reports. Appropriate measures were taken to insure their safety, considering that some tribes had a history of headhunting. Also employed were completion tests to determine the aspirations and self-image of the tribes.

The Cagayan Valley region is located in the northeastern part of Luzon, virtually separated from the rest of the country by high mountain ranges. There are about 20 cultural minority groups living in the hinterlands and shorelines of the Cagayan Valley region with an estimated population of around 1 million. There is no reliable and adequate data on their location, population and educational circumstances. Farming, hunting and fishing are the major sources of livelihood of the people.

The ethnic groups selected for this study, and all other tribes for that matter, show a pattern of mobility – their seasonal tendency to transfer to temporary dwellings in remote 'kaingin' sites, where the children are needed on the farm, thereby reducing their interest in schooling. Since they make 'kaingin' in different sites every year, they tend to move progressively farther from their village settlements, with whole families always transferring to houses set up deep in the jungles. Added to their predicament are the massive logging and the claim of the 'lowlanders' for agricultural, ranch and forest concessions, depriving them of their source of livelihood.

SEVEN ETHNIC GROUPS COVERED BY THE STUDY

The Agtas of Cagayan – *a cultural minority with a long history of rejecting self-help programs. The parents informally impart to their children moral and ethical values. Most learning is by imitation and practice. They are not keen on sanitation, their food is simple, including a strong liking for alcoholic drink – a factor that lays them open to exploitation. Their philosophy is that all Agtas are equal, a belief that is a hindrance to the development of lay teachers and community leaders. The Agtas strive for unity and communal achievement, and shun competition and individual acclaim. Convincing people to enrol in the mobile tent school has been difficult.*

The Ayangans of Ifugao – *a mountain people surviving mainly by farming and some weaving and basket-making. The long distances to village schools have caused the children to drop out. All adults (except one 25 year old man) are illiterate; only four children have completed sixth grade. The Ayangans believe in the supernatural and perform rituals to cure the sick.*

The Bugkalots of Quirino – *unlike the Agtas who shun shool, the Bugkalots clamour for their own school. Many have gone to school and hold simple jobs. Ironically, they still believe in omens and divinations. Some worship the sun, moon and stars and lesser deities called 'anitos'. Their diet is mainly game, fish and rice. Sanitation is taboo, hence the presence of malaria and dysentery. They are very dependent on missionary hand-outs.*

The Dumagats of Isabela – *among these people, who live in a remote region, education is more or less informal and incidental. The few children who enrolled in a nearby primary school dropped out, finding it boring and irrelevant. A Dumagat is contented with his lifestyle and has no aspirations for a better quality of life for himself or his children. The method of social control is shame, sorcery, fear of spirits, and debt of gratitude, which is a deep-rooted value among the Dumagats.*

The Isnegs of Kalinga-Apayao – *part of a major ethnic group of the Central Cordillera, its people engage in farming, hunting and fishing. Very few adults are able to write their names or read simple phrases. They look upon the biggest property owner as the one with authority and influence in the community, and possessions play an important role in their traditions. They still believe in folk-healing, and have a rich folklore of songs and dances.*

The I'waks of Nueva Vizcaya – *also living in a remote area, these I'waks are short, slender and fair, and appear physically week and unclean. Of 123 group members, only twenty-six have gone to school. They are hesitant to welcome new acquaintances to their village. According to them, their culture will prevail despite the absence of a school in the area. They have expressed their desire for learning, but they do not want to give up a piece of their land for a school site. They still believe in 'anitos' and folk-healing.*

The Tinguians of Isabela – *this ethnic group, living at the foot of the Sierra Madre Mountains, value education but their poverty and certain superstitions bar them from being educated. Some adults and children have experienced formal education. Their slash-and-burn farming method makes them a migratory group. Many Tinguians are afflicted with malaria and tuberculosis, and there is a prevalence of gastro-intestinal diseases. They have a unique custom of burying their dead underneath their homes, thereby creating air and water pollution problems.*

MAP OF REGION II THE CAGAYAN VALLEY REGION

THE MOBILE TENT SCHOOL – A BREAKTHROUGH IN LITERACY WORK

Framework

A simple and innovative framework was adopted for the pilot mobile tent school. It was conceived from a system of education that categorizes most learning activities into formal and non-formal education.

Formal education, in structured and chronologically graded levels, stretches from Grade I to Grade VI and through university. It benefits only 1% of the ethnic population, while non-formal education caters to the many who have been by-passed by the formal schools, to those who dropped out and to those who never enrolled. The non-formal education programme covered by the mobile tent school is directed at serving the learning needs of school children age 6 to 12, or any particular group. It is divided into four categories of minimum essential learning needs, namely: (1) family and community life, (2) literacy and numeracy, (3) health and nutrition, and (4) livelihood.

The mobile tent school exemplifies an integrated program for rural development, in which various government agencies collaborate and integrate their development projects. In order to accomplish all the tasks, the schooling system itself had to be re-oriented to the more practical needs of the ethnic groups.

The pilot mobile tent school has significant cost-saving features in that it consists of a single teacher with no demand for infrastructures such as classrooms and school sites. It was set up in tents along an irrigation canal in a lot acquired for them by the SIL in Callao, Peñablanca, Cagayan. A two-storey house became the dormitory of the Agtas when they came down from the mountains as a result of the political unrest.

The mobile tent school is an answer to the mobile nature of the ethnic tribes who are perennially in

search of food. The teacher moves from one settlement to another, holding classes in tents or 'kiosks'. The teacher becomes a government 'broker' who not only looks after the educational needs of the learners, but assists in food production, health, civics and other concerns.

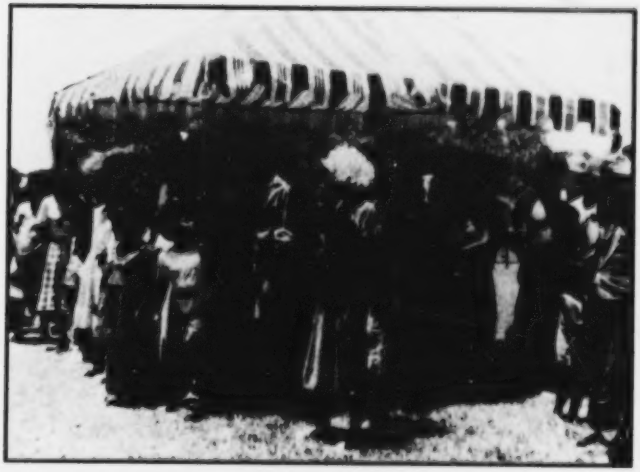
Features of the mobile tent school

One important feature of the Mobile Tent School is the *commitment of the teacher.* A mobile tent school teacher for ethnic groups has different career patterns. She or he is oriented to work under difficult and hazardous conditions, often in isolated communities, and trained in the multiple roles of community worker, spiritual leader, health officer, etc. She understands and respects the culture of the people, speaks their language, and immerses herself in the community.

Ethnic lay leaders assist the mobile tent school teacher. Two Agta laymen who were given literacy certificates by the SIL were assigned to help the teacher and were given a salary of 600 pesos each month. The purpose of their employment is to provide incentive to acquire education, so that while they are assisting they are also learning. They also provide support in terms of pupil attendance and in following up class activities. Both lay teachers attended all the seminar-workshops held for the project and they served as liaisons to the students/children.

The *course content* of the mobile tent school is limited to basic essentials of living which includes the earlier-mentioned categories. All activities are directed to helping the children learn to live. The curriculum introduces them to a more organized life. The plan is to have the children go to the nearby schools as soon as they are ready for formal education.

Instructional facilities and materials consist of temporary facilities such as a collapsible tent, collapsible chairs, tables and boards which are locally produced. A



The portable and collapsible tent used as an MTS classroom.

mobile library together with multi-media instructional materials provide support to the MTS teacher.

Instruction is carried out in modular form. Committees from the various agencies participating in the project prepared modules relevant to the ethnic children's background experience and their growth and development. An example of a module on the areas of family and community life shows that the units are organized

The MTS in action — children singing action songs, identifying simple drawings, counting out loud and writing their names.

systematically, advancing from school orientation to units focusing on self-awareness, family, home, neighbourhood, livelihood, health, science, civics and culture, government, and future expectations. Per unit, the target date or schedule varies from two to three weeks, or a total of twenty-seven weeks for the whole module. The teacher relies on demonstrations, assisted by audio-visual materials. She uses locally available tools and equipment and other improvised instructional materials.

Eduardo Mondejar, a trained Agta lay teacher, teaches his own people.

A feeding programme was an integral part of the MTS to curb the high incidence of malnutrition. Animal dispersal was also implemented, in which children were given animals to care for – with incentives, of course.

Inasmuch as the teacher lives with the tribe, meeting depends on their agreement as to schedule of classes, feeding programmes, etc. She is allowed flexibility and adjustment. When the children leaves for their 'kaingins', the teacher follows them. The two Agta lay teachers assist in bringing the children to the tents. There were no dropouts among the children, as they

were allowed to join their parents in planting and harvesting.

However, the mobile tent school cannot substitute for formal education. Its success relies on the teacher. For the MTS teacher to give her best, she should be provided with a good salary and other incentives such as hazard pay, insurance, medical kit, survival kit, and suitable and varied teaching-learning materials.

One of the major activities of the Mobile Tent School teacher is the translation of instructional materials into the dialect of the minority group. The output of the translators of the project includes: literacy, numeracy, home and family life, health/nutrition and sanitation, livelihood, poems, proverbs and riddles.

Copies of literacy lessons were placed in chart form as there was no provision for printing. It is hoped that the collection of indigenous materials from this study will eventually be printed.

Evaluating the mobile tent school

After the time frame of twenty-eight months, of which twenty covered the tryout period, the MTS was evaluated by DECS, evaluators and people from various sectors and agencies, including foreign educators. Everybody had common impressions which were documented. They agreed that the MTS is economical because it can be stored during typhoons and transferred from one place to another; and that because of the mobility of the Mobile Tent School teacher, she can go where the children are, thereby saving them from hiking, climbing and crossing slopes, mountains and rivers; that the MTS teacher can cover as many settlements as she can reach, thereby increasing the participation rate of ethnic children; that the MTS is a breakthrough in literacy for remote areas; that the parents feel proud to see their children going to school; that in terms of learning, the children have improved their health habits and attitudes and have acquired

basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic; that the ethnic tribes are no longer shy about mingling with their neighbours; that they have developed a sense of independence; and that the flexibility of the class schedule and school calendar can allow the children to help in family chores.

Learning to distinguish the correct answer.

This publication has been produced by the International Bureau of Education within the context of International Literacy Year, 1990.

The International Bureau of Education acknowledges with grateful thanks this contribution by Gloria Lasam to the cause of Literacy. Having begun career as an elementary classroom teacher in 1951, Dr Lasam is now the regional director for the Department of Education, Culture and Sports in the Ilicos region of the Philippines. During her thirty-nine years of public service she has fulfilled a multitude of functions as teacher, principal, project director, researcher and author, and has represented her country in two regional meetings on educational development.

This document is available in English and French and can be freely reproduced, and translated into other languages. It would be appreciated if a copy of any publication reproducing this text in full or in part could be sent to: (1) ED/PBL, Unesco, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France; and (2) IBE, P.O. Box 199, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.

Readers are reminded that the opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the view of Unesco. The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Unesco Secretariat concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

All photos by the author.

Published in 1990 by Unesco: International Bureau of Education,
P.O. Box 199, 1211 Genève 20, Switzerland.